



# ***NEWS RELEASE***

## **PRESS OFFICE**

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## ***PRESIDENT ISSUES EXECUTIVE ORDER CALLING FOR GOVERNMENT TO "MEET OR EXCEED" FIVE PERCENT CONTRACT GOAL FOR WOMEN***

**WASHINGTON --** President Clinton signed an Executive Order today calling on all federal agencies to take immediate steps that will lead the government to "meet or exceed" the five percent government contracting goal that now exists for women-owned small businesses.

The order comes at the start of National Small Business Week when recognition is given to the accomplishments of the more than 25 million small businesses nationwide. It's estimated that women own more than nine million U.S. businesses.

The President's order directs departments and agencies to develop long-term comprehensive strategies to expand opportunities for women-owned small businesses.

**"The President's order is strong and unequivocal about this Administration's commitment to ensuring that women-owned small businesses receive a fair share of federal contracts,"** said SBA Administrator Aida Alvarez. **"I am extremely pleased that this order is being issued during Small Business Week. Women-owned businesses are among the fastest growing sectors in the economy and their contributions to the current economic expansion are considerable."**

The Executive Order directs the U.S. Small Business Administration to:

- establish an Office of Women's Procurement;
- provide more extensive training and technical assistance to women-owned small businesses;
- develop a single Web site to provide procurement information to women-owned small businesses;
- develop an interactive database containing information on women-owned small businesses; and
- work with state governments to share information concerning procurement opportunities.

**-more-**

The *National Foundation of Women Business Owners* (NFWBO) estimates that in 1999 there were 9.1 million women-owned small businesses, employing 27.5 million people and generating over \$3.6 trillion in sales and revenues. In fiscal year 1999, women-owned small businesses secured just under \$4.6 billion in federal contracts, which amounts to 2.5 percent of the nearly \$186 billion in U.S. contracts accessible to small businesses.

**"The National Women's Business Council applauds the President's efforts in increasing competitive contracting opportunities for women business owners,"** said Kay Koplovitz, Chair of the National Women's Business Council. **"This Executive Order provides the federal agencies with a clear action plan for meeting and exceeding the statutory five percent women's procurement goal. As always, we look forward to working closely with the Federal departments and agencies in implementing this important directive."**

The order also requires departments and agencies to take specific steps such as:

- designating a senior acquisition official to identify and promote contracting opportunities for women-owned small businesses;
- requiring contracting officers, to the maximum extent practicable, to include women-owned small businesses in competitive acquisitions;
- implementing mentor-protégé programs to include women-owned firms;
- offering industry-wide as well as industry specific outreach, training, and technical assistance programs for women-owned small businesses; and
- requiring agencies that fail to meet their goals to establish an action plan to increase participation in the future.

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*For more information on Small Business Week and a complete list of award winners, visit the SBA's Small Business Week Web site at <http://smallbusinesssuccess.sba.gov>.*

*Additional information about SBA programs and services is available at SBA's Web site: <http://www.sba.gov>. Or call the SBA Answer Desk at 1-800-U-ASK-SBA.*

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